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REZENSIONEN / COMPTES RENDUS / REVIEWS

Akṣapāda Pakṣilasvāmin / Gautama Akṣapāda: *L'art de conduire la pensée en Inde Ancienne.* Nyāya-Sūtra *de Gautama Akṣapāda* et Nyāya-Bhāṣya *d'Akṣapāda Pakṣilasvāmin.* Édition, traduction et présentation de Michel ANGOT. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2009 (Collection Indika, 2). 896 pp., ISBN-13: 978-2-251-72051-7.

1. Angot's Introduction: Some walks through the philosophical woods

Michel Angot published something long unheard of within the history of scholarship on Indian philosophy. In fact, after the time of G. Jhā, hardly anyone attempted a complete translation of a master-piece of Indian philosophy such as the *Nyāyabhāṣya* (henceforth NBh). Thus, one cannot but start a review by congratulating the author for his courage and for the very fact that he presents to the reader the translation of the complete system of Nyāya in its essential fundament, i.e., the *Nyāyasūtra* (henceforth NS) attributed to Gautama and its earliest extant commentary, the NBh attributed to Pakṣilasvāmin / Vātsyāyana.[1]

Translating it all has the double advantage of helping the reader to better understand Nyāya, and the translator himself to better evaluate the role of each part of Nyāya. No big effort is needed to remember instances in which the emphasis on just one part of a system has led scholars to misunderstand the relationship of that part with the rest and the general purpose of the system itself.

Beside the translation, the book also includes a very long introductory study (242 pp.), which deals not only with Nyāya, but also with very broad issues, such as the existence of philosophy in India. Further examples of topics touched on in the introduction are: whether there is an "Indian" philosophy (pp.26–32, the final view is that "Sanskrit philosophy" would mostly make better sense, see below), whether we can possibly use a Western language (and

1 Angot (possibly inspired by Bronkhorst's view on the connection of *Yogasūtra* and *Yogabhāṣya*?) claims the NS was – prior to the NBh – transmitted in an oral form and only acquired its definitive form through the NBh. Both are dated "between the 2nd and the 5th c. AD".

its terminology) to translate and understand Sanskrit texts (pp. 33–37), comparativism (pp.46–50), the real purpose of the *Mānavadharmaśāstra* (p. 59), the correct interpretation of the first *vārttika* on the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* (p. 66) and so on. Reviewing and evaluating the book in a restricted number of pages is, thus, extremely complex. I learnt from Raffaele Torella that a review has also the purpose to tell somebody whether s/he ought to buy the book or not. In the case of Angot's book, my answer to this question would be: it depends on the reader. If s/he wants to take a "walk through the woods" of Indian philosophy, this book is excellent. It offers much food for thought, as if one were having dinner with a brilliant company. If, by contrast, the reader wants to read a rigorous essay, s/he might find Angot's one disturbing. Part of it is not Angot's fault but the publishing house's. The book almost lacks margins, so that one is not be able to add notes, arrows or the like. Furthermore, it lacks any index and does not have a complete table of contents, so that one can only dive into the dense, spaceless but high-content introduction and read it all, with no reader-friendly help. Similarly, the book is flawed by far too many misprints, also to be charged to the publishing house. The reader will automatically emend most of the minor ones, but might have more problems when entire syllables are dropped from or added to the Sanskrit text (for instance, on p. 224, within the text of the *Caraka-saṃhitā*: *anupaskṛtatavidyena* instead of *anupasaṃskṛtavidyena*).[2]

I learnt from another of my teachers (M.M. Olivetti) that the more one talks about something, the less one has said, because the readers' expectations become bigger the more one says. The reader is reminded of this paradox while reading Michel Angot's long and fascinating introduction, which deals with fundamental methodological questions.

Obviously enough, the broader the question and the greater the number of broad questions dealt with, the less satisfying the answers. For instance, one is disappointed to see that Pollock's thesis about the "death of Sanskrit" is accepted as matter-of-fact, as if no one had ever questioned it (p. 33, fn. 71). Conceptually, the present writer is even more puzzled by Angot's statements about the absence of the concept of "possess" (*avoir*) and "ought" (*devoir*) not just in Sanskrit language, but also in Sanskrit thought (pp. 38–44), especially since the accurateness of Angot's reflection concerning Sanskrit is accompanied

2 An example of a minor misprint, which is however difficult to emend, is the name of Y. Muroya, a member of the Vienna équipe working on the NBh edition, whom Angot thanks on the very first page as "Y. Moyura".

by no reflections at all about the French usage of these words. Angot seems to use French almost in the same way he reproaches Indians to have used Sanskrit, that is, as if it were the "natural language", the one in comparison to which any other might be judged. Thus, since there is a verb "to have" in French and not in Sanskrit, Angot discusses the "absence" of the corresponding meaning in Sanskrit (p. 43). He does not discuss its *presence* in French, nor does he seem to admit the possibility that the same content might be expressed by means of two different phraseologies. I might be wrong, but I cannot see any conceptual difference between the Latin way of expressing possess (*mihi est …*), the Hindī one (*mere pās … hai*) and the French one (*j'ai …*). And even if there were one (for instance, if the French phraseology would stress one's agency within a possess-relation), French would be part of the question and not a judge aloof of it. One might argue, for instance, that French thinkers misconstrue the relation of possess as if an agent were implied, although it is quite different from the description of an action. Structural linguists do in fact distinguish between the "I" in "I cook" (agent), the "I" in "I hear" (experiencer) and the "I" in "I have" (theme or patient).

However, it is noteworthy that Angot himself at another point of his long introduction criticises the idea that language determines thought (p. 48) and adds the very important *caveat* that one is never sure that the categories we now attribute to a language are the same shared by ancient authors thinking in that same language (p. 48, fn.120). He also translates *dharma* (in Patañjali's *Paspaśā*) with *devoir*, which might appear confusing (p. 54).

Similarly, his apodictic statements about the absence of rhetoric in the "Sanskrit world" (p. 49) or about the absence of "historical science and historical awareness by the authors of that [=Sanskrit] culture" ("La science historique aussi bien que la conscience historique font défaut aux auteurs de cette culture", p. 51) are mitigated by his criticism towards every essentialisation by virtue of which one speaks of "India" or "Greece" in general (pp. 47–48), and by his mistrust about the application of Western terminology to Sanskrit works (pp. 34–36).

Connected with the idea of taking a walk through the woods is Angot's relation to secondary literature. He tends to quote many times a single work (e.g., a pdf-document written in 2006 by the historian Dwijendra Narayan Jha in the context of the polemics against Hindutva and only available on-line), whereas the reader will notice many absences among the references. Angot seems to be quoting works he has read and liked, rather than attempting a survey of all that is available on a certain topic.

Summing up, Angot's introduction is intriguing, since it dares to deal with general themes and offers audacious solutions to ambitious questions. In many cases, the questions are more interesting than the answers and the generalisations appear too superficial (are today's Brahmans really that close to their "predecessors"? Are their "predecessors" a single category, from the 10th c. BC to the 18th AD? see pp. 54–55) but it remains extremely stimulating, at times even *through* its incompleteness. To go back to the metaphor mentioned above: if one has been lucky enough to be invited to dinner by a brilliant thinker and scholar, s/he should not expect precise notes, but rather inspiring conversation.

2. Angot's approach

2.1. *The scope of comparative philosophy*

As already hinted at, there is very much of interest in Angot's introductory essay, and especially in his way of questioning. Consider the following statement about the fact that comparison is not natural, but intellectually decided ("texts and cultures are not comparable, they are compared"):

> Selon nous, la comparaison ne résulte pas d'une vocation naturelle des cultures, des langues, des philosophies, etc. mais d'une décision intellectuelle. Les cultures ou les textes ne sont pas comparables, mais comparés. (p. 50).

And why should one intellectually decide to start comparing? Angot is quite sceptical. Once one has given Nyāya its legitimate place, s/he should study it "just like one studies Artistotle, Descartes or Hegel, for whom nobody would think of adopting the perspective of 'compared philosophy'":

> Dans notre esprit, il ne s'agit pas d'instaurer une base de discussion pour les philosophes modernes: le Nyāya a naturellement sa place dans le domaine de l'esprit et, me semble-t-il, il n'y a pas lieu d'instaurer un dialogue qui serait aussi fictif qu'artificiel; le rôle de pontif ou de passeur, comme l'entendait B. K. Matilal nous semble inutile. Il demeure bien nécessaire de mettre à mal des préventions, de réparer des oublis, etc. à propos des textes et des auteurs sanskrits. Mais une fois reconnue la valeur de la philosophie de Nāgārjuna ou de Dharmakīrti, il demeure à les étudier de la même façon qu'on étudie Aristote, Descartes ou Hegel, pour lesquels il ne vient à l'idée de personne d'adopter l'angle de la 'philosophie comparée'. Cela n'exclut pas de contraster l'usage de tel ou tel concept, de telle ou telle méthode (pp. 66–67).

Furthermore, Angot also faces the more general issue of the base of comparative philosophy, namely the mutual similarity or difference among distinct cultures. He opts for radical difference, but refutes the relativism which would follow from it. By contrast, he maintains that "the universal constantly appears with the contextual, and nobody can put an exact barrier between them":

> A certains égards, toutes ces doctrines, même quand on les comprends, sont donc radicalement différentes. Un tel relativisme généralisé pourrait déboucher sur une étude purement historique et pittoresque de ces hommes et de leurs idées […]. En fait, il n'en est rien: à chaque pas, l'universel pointe avec le contextuel, sans que l'on puisse exactement établir une barrière entre les deux. Universalisme donc où l'on reconnaît un seul espace philosophique qu'explorent diverses cultures. Mais il ne débouche pas nécessairement sur une synthèse où se perdrait toute contextualité (p. 67).

2.2. *Angot's view of Indian philosophy*

Apart from the preliminary statement that "Indian" does not make sense, since it has no Sanskrit equivalent and runs the risk to evoke a contemporary political entity, Angot has a lot to say about the so-called Indian philosophy in general. The author maintains, for instance, that Indian philosophers were first of all performers, namely that they performed debates. They were not contemplative souls, detached from worldly worries, but rather sanguinely engaged in confrontations. Confrontation is indeed the standard form of expression in Sanskrit, according to Angot.

Angot then adds, without any apparent explanation, that philosophy after the NBh "surrendered to religion". Abhinavagupta could be a great philosopher, but only insofar as he was first of all a theologian, and so on. On the contrary, authors until the NBh could doubt everything, including the Veda. They were, Angot suggests, like the sophists in Ancient Greece (pp.11–12).

Again, I am tempted to think that the opposition between philosophy and theology is at least worth further questioning; that doubt seems to play a role more complex than Angot seems prepared to admit (think of its celebration in Jayanta, who is much later than the NBh and who defends the authority of Sacred Texts), and that "pure" inquiry is utopian. But Angot's discussion is thought-provoking, it stimulates discussion and it may fertilise Indological milieus even through its provocative approach. In this regard, I understand that Angot wants to address the wide audience he contributed to create in France, and that it is meaningless to try to rescue the Sanskrit heritage while at the same time

discarding all languages other than English. Nonetheless, it is a fact that writing in French will mean that many of the Anglo-American philosophers Angot directly addresses will never read his text. A paradigmatic case is that of Karl Potter, against whom Angot contends that Nyāya is not a direct equivalent of "Logic", and that *nyāya* in NS is not the name of a discipline (pp. 73–74). Angot is probably right in the points he makes and certainly right in raising the questions. Similarly, Angot is convincing when he argues against B. K. Matilal that he has been too much influenced by the classical and post-classical developments of Nyāya, even while interpreting its earlier phases.

2.3. *Angot on Nyāya*

What does one find specifically on Nyāya in Angot's introduction? Apart from many short remarks throughout the introduction, Angot dedicates many pages to the structure of the NS and to the way it deviates from its structure as described in the NBh (in many cases, these deviations seem to me less significant than to Angot). Next, he discusses rationality and Nyāya, examining the syllogism. He also investigates the common pre-history of Nyāya and Āyurveda, with excerpts of texts and translations from the *Carakasaṃhitā*.

2.4. *Purpose of the translation*

As for the purpose of his translation, Angot states that his "purpose is not to translate, but to understand and make other people understand texts such as the *Nyāyasūtra* and the *Bhāṣya*, within the context in which they have been composed":

> Quant à nous, notre but n'est pas de traduire, mais de comprendre et de faire comprendre des textes comme les *Nyāya-Sūtra* et *Bhāṣya* dans le contexte où ils furent composés. (p.37)

This means that Angot feels authorized to insert short glosses within the text, if they make it clearer (for instance, at the end of NBh on 2.1.49 he adds within the translation: "c'est-à-dire elle est une connaissance ultérieure").

Personally, I deeply appreciate Angot's stress on understanding vs. translating and I appreciate even more his ability to be clear about what he is doing. Nonetheless, I would not subscribe to the ambition of understanding a text "in the context in which it has been composed", since I am more interested in the

(more realistic) effort of understanding a text's fortune and tradition. The same lack of stress on the historical perspective also irritates me when Angot uses sources of very different ages, including contemporary debates, in order to better understand the role of debate in ancient India (p. 104), as if nothing substantial had happened after the Veda and before Colonialism. This might be legitimate, but readers might have expected a more accurate adherence to the historical data, given that Angot has convincingly argued that the label "Indian" applied to philosophy is historically unwarranted.

3. Text and translation

The editor chooses a reader-friendly rendering of the text, with a Devanāgarī version of the *sūtra*, followed by its transcription in Roman alphabet and by a transcription which looses all sandhis, separates words and marks all members of compounds. The NBh text is only given in the latter version (e.g.: *Tac ca ātma-ādi ity ātmā vivicyate*. Sandhis between e.g. *ca-ātmā* and *ādi-ity*, are marked with a non-orthodox line, i.e., a curved line under the text). The same does not apply for the Sanskrit quotations within the introductory study, which are given in Roman alphabet, but without interruption, as if they were in Devanāgarī, e.g. *abhyupagamasiddhānto nāma sa yamarthamasiddhamaparīkṣita-manupdiṣṭamahetukaṃ vā*, [*sic*] (p. 232).

The translation is accompanied by a dense annotation, which reflects most of the positive traits of the introduction. Like the introduction, it is full of insightful remarks and it is not limited to textual-critical notes, nor to precise glosses on single terms. Just to mention a single case, while translating NBh on 1.1.7, Angot does not think he needs to translate the two *vyavahāra*s (which are six words apart) in the same way, but he adds a lot of interesting information about the proximity of deities, humans and animals in the same passage (p. 286, fn. 816) and about several other topics. Part of this additional information seems to be only loosely connected with the main topic. NBh ad 1.1.8 distinguishes linguistic communication as instrument of knowledge in two sub-types, one regarding perceivable things (*dṛṣṭa*), and the other regarding things that cannot be perceived (*adṛṣṭa*). Angot notes that the distinction might have been influenced by Mīmāṃsā and adds: "Une des règles de la Mīmāṃsā est que, si quelque chose a une motivation visible, il n'y a pas lieu de lui assigner une motivation invisible". This is probably an instance of the *dṛṣṭa-adṛṣṭa* distinction, but the

reader might be at first puzzled, struggling to find a direct connection with NBh ad 1.1.8.

As usual in Indian commentaries, the annotation decreases after the first *adhyāya*s. This is a pity, since the last *adhyāya*s, which are dedicated to dialectics, are, as Angot himself remarks in the introduction, less studied, both in India and in the West. As for the translation itself, as already pointed out, it aims at being comprehensible more than at being accurate. This means that, unlike most "Indological" translations, it is readable and often even enjoyable. Due to the space limitations of a review and to the ambition of Angot's translation, I will only focus on a few points. In this connection it is worth remembering that Angot translated the whole NBh and that, consequently, the vastness of his effort largely compensates occasional lapses.

3.1. *NBh on 4.1.37*

Contesting the Buddhist stance on the non-existence of everything, the Naiyāyika explains that the Buddhist syllogism is in itself contradictory. Why? "[…] car il demeure impossible de penser l'absence en termes de multiplicité et de multiplicité" (p. 664). The Sanskrit has *anekatā* and *aśeṣatā*. The repetition in Angot's translation is probably just accidental, but the translation thus fails to highlight the difference between the two terms. More importantly, the translation fails to explain that the contradiction lies exactly in the proximity of "non-existence" and "totality". How could the totality of everything be just "non-existing?"

3.2. *NBh on 5.1.15*

The section discusses doubt (*saṃśaya*). This is described as due to the fact that a certain thing shares similarities with two sets of other things. For instance, in the case of sound *nityānityasādharmyāt saṃśayaḥ*, which Angot translates as: "le doute provenant d'une ressemblance avec ce qui est permanent ou impermanent". Given the ambiguity of the French *ou* (equivalent to both the Latin *aut* and *vel* and therefore expressing both an inclusive and an exclusive disjunction), the translation is not false, but it fails to underline the resemblance to *both* permanent *and* impermanent kinds of things.

3.3. *NBh on 5.2.18*

The section discusses the weak points (*nigrahasthāna*) through which one is defeated in a debate. The whole section is problematic because the list often seems to depend more on conventions widespread at the time of the NS than on structural necessity. Moreover, the NBh's gloss is often quite short and terms such as *uttara* (reply) and *vādin* (speaker) might be difficult to interpret: is the *vādin* always the one the NS addresses? Is *uttara* always his reply to the adversary? The only way to make sense of the passage is often to have recourse to a clearer commentary, such as those of Jayanta Bhaṭṭa within his *Nyāyamañjarī* and within his *Nyāyakalikā*.[3]

One of the weak-points is called *apratibhā*. The term *pratibhā* has a complex history, and it seems to indicate one's intuitive power, or one's ability to immediately grasp something. The *apratibhā* is defined as follows in the NS: *uttarasyāpratipattir apratibhā*. The NBh adds: *parapakṣapratiṣedha uttaram. tad yadā na pratipadyate, tadā nigṛhīto bhavati*. Let me now compare Angot's translation and the one I would suggest:

> L'incapacité à formuler une réponse est l'*apratibhā* 'embarras'.
> L'*uttara* c'est la réfutation du parti adverse; et de fait quand on ne peut la formuler, on est vaincu.
>
> The *apratibhā* consists in non-understanding the reply.
> The reply is the confutation of the other's view. When one does not understand it (the reply), one has been defeated.

The main divergence lies in the interpretation of *pratipatti/pratipadyate*, which Angot translates as causatives. Both translations are open to debate, since mine favours a less cumbersome understanding of *pratipatti/pratipadyate*, but in order to do that *uttara* must be taken in a non-technical way, i.e., as a generic reply, independently of the one who is uttering it. My translation relies on Jayanta and on the fact that he openly refers to the fact that one might miss the sense of the *uttara*. Angot might easily object that Jayanta does not need to be right. Moreover, one cannot expect a translator of the whole NBh to read all subcommentaries.

Elisa Freschi

3 I had the pleasure to read parts of both in Vienna, together with Daniele Cuneo and Alessandro Graheli.